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Letter dated 24 July 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Sierra Leone to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

On instructions of my Government, I have the honour to forward the attached address by President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, at the pass off ceremony for the First 1,000 personnel under the United Kingdom Short-Term Training Programme on 22 July 2000.

Among other things, he announced that he would soon order the establishment of a code of conduct for the Armed Forces containing basic principles to guide all armed service and security personnel in the conduct of all their duties.

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be issued as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Ibrahim M. **Kamara**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 24 July 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Sierra Leone to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Address by President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Sierra Leone at the pass off ceremony for the first 1,000 military personnel, under the United Kingdom short-term training programme, held at the Benguema Training Centre on Saturday, 22 July 2000

Your Excellencies,

Officers of the British training team and British Armed Forces,

Officers and members of the Armed Forces of Sierra Leone,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen:

My presence here today is part of my constitutional function as Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Sierra Leone. I am also here in an equally important capacity. I am here as a loyal citizen to represent all my compatriots who, for the past several years have been earnestly praying for a more reliable and efficient corps of military and security personnel who will protect us and safeguard our aspirations at all times. Today's ceremony is a clear indication that our prayer is being answered. I am therefore glad to witness and address this historic occasion — the Pass Off of 1,000 "service continued" personnel of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Sierra Leone.

Let me first of all salute Brigadier Hughes and other officers of the Short-Term Training Team from the 2nd Battalion the Royal Anglian Regiment, for a job well done. You have demonstrated and imparted some of the finest traditions of British military training and recruitment, traditions that we inherited 39 years ago when we achieved our independence from Britain. In commending you we recall the exemplary role that other British officers had played in the development of our army, officers such as Brigadier R. D. Blackie, the last commanding officer of the Sierra Leone regiment, and subsequently the first head of the Royal Sierra Leone Military Forces. The best way we can all say thank you to these distinguished officers is to scrupulously follow what they taught you.

Today's ceremony marks and important stage in our ongoing efforts to rebuild our Armed Forces so that they can, together with the Police, Public Officers and other security agents, resume their constitutional duty, namely "to protect and safeguard the people of Sierra Leone". Needless to say that the security of the State of Sierra Leone has been and is still the priority concern of my Government.

To you, the graduating soldiers, I congratulate you on behalf of the Government and people of Sierra Leone. We welcome some of you formally, once again, into the Armed Forces of the Republic. This is not just a "passing off" parade. It is a graduation ceremony. Today, after your orientation training course you have elevated yourself to a higher level of responsibility to the nation. Your British instructors have commended you for your diligence, hard work and sense of

commitment during this groundbreaking six-week training course. I should add here that military training is not cheap. The Government of the United Kingdom and the instructors have expended considerable time and material and human resources in providing the skills you now possess. It is my hope that you will not let them down.

The course you have just completed is part of a package of military training being provided by the United Kingdom at the request of the Government of Sierra Leone. It encompasses basic infantry, specialist and staff and leadership training. It is part of a longer-term project to reorganize and restructure the Armed Forces, and to establish a properly functioning Ministry of Defence. The project will result in well-trained, professional, disciplined, accountable, loyal and capable Armed Forces under the authority and control of the democratically elected civilian Government of Sierra Leone.

You are the first 1,000 products of this national restructuring exercise. You are, in a sense, trailblazers. It is therefore incumbent on you to set the standard for the future, to help restore the image and credibility of the Armed Forces. Disloyal armed elements, as well as your colleagues and potential recruits will be watching you closely. In your attitude and performance you also have an obligation to take pride in the past glories of veterans of the Royal West African Frontier Force, the Royal West African Rifles, and the Sierra Leone regiment. Consider yourselves as having today received the baton of honour from your predecessors who excelled themselves in the Cameroon campaign of the First World War, and at Myohaung in Burma during the Second World War.

Consistent with your renewed determination to find inspiration in the achievements of those veterans, we should revive the annual observance of Myohaung Day, with all the pomp and circumstance it deserves, and help to generate a sense of patriotism in all those who are recruited for service in the Armed Forces of our country.

While you have every reason to be proud of what you have achieved during this training course, let me remind you that this is just one phase of the process of becoming a real professional soldier. Much will be expected of you to demonstrate your military skills. You will have to prove yourself on operations where you will be required to display the real characteristics of a good soldier — courage, bravery, discipline and obedience to lawful orders.

You will soon be moving on to the next phase of your training, where you will have the opportunity to demonstrate your military skills in the field under controlled conditions, once again with the support and assistance of the British instructors. You will then receive new equipment in readiness to be deployed in defence of the people of Sierra Leone against the rebels and marauders who continue to terrorize the nation and illegally exploit our diamonds and other resources to fuel their atrocious aggression.

Let me emphasize that the objective of the operations you will be called to embark upon is not merely to defend the principles of democratic governance and the institutions for maintaining the rule of law. First and foremost, your job will be to protect the very survival of this nation and its people.

In the course of the operations you will be required to protect the civilian population, respect human rights, and respect international humanitarian and other

laws of armed conflict. And do not forget that the people of Sierra Leone and the international community will be watching your performance.

I should like to take this opportunity to announce that, as part of our effort to instil patriotism, professionalism, accountability and respect for domestic and international law, I shall soon, in my capacity as Commander-in-Chief, order the establishment of a code of conduct for our Armed Forces. Written in simple language, and printed in a small hard-cover pocket book, the code will contain a set of basic principles to guide all armed service and security personnel in the conduct of all their duties. They will be required to carry the booklet at all times as a constant reminder of their special responsibility for the safety and welfare of the people, as well as for the protection of the Constitution of our Republic.

Let me also remind our graduate soldiers that you must set an example by recognizing that interference by the Armed Forces in government, or the forceful overthrow of a Government democratically elected by the people, is no longer tolerated in Sierra Leone and in the African continent. Of course, under our Constitution, no member of the Armed Forces should hold office as head of State, minister, deputy minister, or be qualified to be a member of Parliament whilst he or she remains a member of the Armed Forces. Being a member of the Armed Forces is neither a right nor an entitlement to gain political power by force. Your allegiance is to the Government elected by the people. So, you must always act within the law and the Constitution. I wish you every success in the future and pray that God will bless and look over you.

In closing, I would like to extend my profound appreciation to the Government of the United Kingdom for its continued support and assistance in this and other sectors of the development of Sierra Leone. Our special thanks go once again to the Training Team, as well as to other members of the British Armed Forces for this sterling contribution to the restructuring of our Armed Forces. We look forward to receiving the second Short-Term Training Team to train another 1,000 "service continued" personnel here at Benguema.

Our thanks also go to our Deputy Minister of Defence, the Acting Chief of Defence Staff, the Commandant of the Benguema Training Centre and his industrious staff for making this graduation a reality.

Your Excellencies, distinguished guests, esteemed ladies and gentlemen, by your presence here today, you have demonstrated your support of our determination to ensure the safety, security and future stability of our beloved country and its people. May our vision for a transformed and forward-looking Sierra Leone yield positive results for all of us.

Thank you for coming, and may God bless us all.